

Lila's questions.

Q. What do asankharika (unprompted) and sasankharika (prompted) mean? Sankhara is translated as volitional activities, what does volition have to do with asankharika and sasankharika?

A. Sankhara can have different meanings and we should know the context in which it is used. We should not just think of volition and fit that into all the words which are composed with sankhara.

There are saṅkhāra dhammas, conditioned dhammas. Citta, cetasika and rūpa are conditioned dhammas, saṅkhāra dhammas. The five khandhas are saṅkhāra dhammas.

One khandha is saṅkharakkhandha, consisting of fifty cetasikas. saṅkhāra has here a different meaning. Cetana is among the fifty cetasikas, but let us just remember that they are fifty. Saṅkharakkhandha is sankhara dhamma but not all sankhara dhammas are sankharakkhandha.

The word sankhara is used in the dependant origination. There are three 'abhi-saṅkhāras': puññabhisaṅkhāra, meritorious volition, pertaining to kāmāvacara kusala (mahā-kusala) and rūpa-jhāna.

apuññabhisaṅkhara, unwholesome volition, akusala.

aneñjābhisaṅkhāra, kusala of arūpa-jhāna.

Because of ignorance we go on in the cycle of birth and death, performing kammās, wholesome and unwholesome. These bring results and thus there will be other lives in order to experience the vipakas.

sasankharika and asankharika, prompted and unprompted, again a different meaning. (Atth p. 207). The prompting, in the case of lobha-mula-citta, dosa-mula-citta or kusala citta can be external or it can be from within. A citta which is asankharika is stronger than a citta which is sasankharika. There are many ways these words have been translated, but we should understand the meaning. Sometimes we give at once or help at once, but at other times we do it more sasankharika. Maybe we can sometimes notice it.

Thus we see, in each context the meaning of sankhara is different.

Q. Is always one cetasika predominant in a citta?

A. In a citta: it would be better to say: cetasikas accompany citta, they are with a citta. All the cetasikas have a function to perform, and we can say: cetana coordinates the work of the other cittas, but is it predominant? In akusala citta and kusala citta cetana, apart from coordinating the work of the other cetasikas, wills akusala or kusala, but is that predominance?

Certain cetasikas are roots, hetus, cittas are rooted in them.
Can we say that hetus are predominant?

Predominance is used in the teachings, in the case of predominance condition: for example you can do a wholesome work while chanda is predominant, you like to do it, or ^{while} energy, viriya, is predominant. There can be predominance of citta. In that case it is kusala citta or akusala citta, accompanied by at least two hetus. There can also be predominance of vimamsa, which is another word for pañña.

Q. When the cetasika jivitindriya is predominant, is rupa-jivitindriya the predominant rupa?

A. Jivitindriya cetasika has a function, but how could we call it predominant? From your question it seems that you would like to match each cetasika with a corresponding rūpa, but this does not work. The groups of rupa which are produced by kamma have jivitindriya, not the other groups of rupa, such as the rupas produced by citta, by food or by temperature, and what we call our body has different kinds of rupa (in groups) produced by these different causes.

Q. What kind of nama or cetasika would different rupas go with? For example, sex, bodily and verbal intimation.

A. Sex which is a characteristic of rupa all over the body, is produced by kamma. Bodily and verbal intimation are rupas, produced by citta..(But the pancavinnanas cannot produce any rupa).

Q. There are at least 8 rupas in a group of rupas. Is one predominant, such as hardness? Or any other one?

Solidity has a task, but so has cohesion, which holds the rupas together, so I do not see why any of the four would be predominant.

Q. If in seeing-consciousness the predominant cetasika is contact, is visible object the predominant rūpa in the group of rupas?

A. Seeing sees only visible object, the accompanying rūpas cannot be seen and not be experienced at the moment of seeing. At that moment there is eye-contact. But also other cetasikas perform their functions. Why would contact be predominant? ^{Q. Does the fact that one is born with somanassa or with upekkha} (and thus all the bhavanga-cittas are accompanied by the same feeling) have influence during one's life on the cittas? Bhavanga-citta with upekkha could cause one to be with less somanassa and more akusala than those born with somanassa?

A. When the patisandhi-citta (rebirth-consciousness) is accompanied by somanassa, it is the result of kusala kamma performed with somanassa. When the patisandhi-citta is accompanied by upekkha it is, in the case of human beings the result of kusala kamma performed with upekkha. If the

vipakacitta is ahetuka vipakacitta it is a weak vipāka, and in this case one is handicapped from the first moment of life. The patisandhi-cittas ^{can be} accompanied by sobhana-hetus, by alobha and adosa (two roots) or by alobha, adosa and paññā (three roots). The patisandhicittas accompanied by two roots can have somanassa or upekkha, and the same is true for patisandhicittas with three roots. We cannot speculate at all what kind of patisandhi-citta we had, and thus what kind of bhavanga-cittas we have. When one has attained jhana or enlightenment one knows that the patisandhicitta had three roots, that it was accompanied by paññā. Thus, the fact that one ^{is} born with wisdom certainly means that one has accumulations to develop wisdom. But even if one is born with wisdom one may not develop it enough to attain enlightenment. No use to guess about ourselves, let us develop now, it is never lost.

As to feelings, feelings are so intricate. What you call good-natured may be lobha-mulacitta. Why would the upekkha feeling which is vipaka ^(of the bhavanga-citta) condition akusala, no reason at all. Akusala citta arises more easily than kusala citta anyway, no matter whether the accompanying feeling is somanassa or upekkha. Somanassa is bound to be more often akusala than kusala, if you consider that akusala citta arises so often.

I am wondering why you want to know about cetasikas and rupas which would be predominant. I heard someone say that he thought that sati is aware of what is predominant, such as strong lobha. Sati can be aware of any object which appears, it depends on sati which object it is aware of, we cannot direct sati towards strong lobha or any other kind of nāma or rūpa. Thinking of what is predominant does not help with mindfulness.

It is useful to study in the Abhidhamma which kinds of nāma and rūpa are produced by which of the four factors. But it is most important to study with awareness the different characteristics of nāma and rūpa when they appear, so that paññā will know that they are not the same. Then you will not try anymore to make a picture in your mind of which nāmas match with which rūpas. The study of the Abhidhamma should go together with sati, otherwise we may tend to speculations about nāma and rūpa.

Hardness is not the same as the experience of it, seeing is not the same as visible object, hearing is not the same as sound. We may think, O, no, that is too difficult, how can it ever be known? But should a start not be made by just studying? 'If we do not study paññā cannot grow,' Khun Sujin reminded us every day in Sri Lanka. Study means mindfulness of realities over and over again, countless times. No sitting needed, no 'meditation courses', these only enhance desire.

Dhammapada 116 'Make haste in doing good; check your mind from evil; for the mind of him who is slow in doing merit delights in evil'. One can apply it right now; if there is no sati now it is time for akusala. This text is so full of meaning if one thinks of the cittas, as fast as that!

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material
vipassana
Questions
Dear Marie Antoinette,

Thank you for your letter where you answer the questions.
I will select a few answers to which I will add some comments.
First about some news from Bangkok; the next pilgrimage is in about two years and when you feel like joining it is best to contact Khun Sujin directly so that you will be kept informed of the details (Thun. Sujin Boriharnwanaket, Sov Chiang Jiang, 159 Sathorn South, Bangkok). It would be wonderful if you could join, but I hope you will go to Bangkok before that. The Australian monk I wrote to you about, Venerable Dhammadhara, has now a very large group of people of different nationalities who gather each day in his temple. Together they also see Khun Sujin. In fact, I do not know whether I can wait two years and might go to Bangkok sooner. The Dhamma friends over there will know you already, you will not be a stranger to them, because now I send a copy of this letter to them, and the letter is read in their group. I do this now and then, because we all share our experiences and what we learn. We are all learning to develop, just starting and we send each other reminders in the form of letters or tapes, we need reminders. We need contact with the right people and I like to let you share too in this contact.

Question 2: Noticing that akusala cittas are different from kusala cittas, is that sati? You answer it is not sati but vipassana. First about this last distinction: when speaking about sati in this context I mean sati in vipassana: sati is aware of an object so that paññā can know it as it is. They both arise with the citta which develops the Path.

Noticing... this is thinking, not sati in vipassanā. ~~How~~ Why? do we know? Because the first step of wisdom in vipassana, the wisdom which is not theoretical, not thinking about concepts, is just: knowing the difference between nāma and rūpa. When this is known, nāma is known as nāma and rūpa is known as rūpa. But this is only a beginning stage. Not all namas and rupas are known, it may be only a few which appear and paññā has to be developed more and more. At that stage the minddoor is known, which the minddoor is no longer hidden. Now, we do not know when colour is experienced through eyedoor and when through the minddoor, we have no precise knowledge of nama and rupa. Therefore, we may notice through thinking that there were akusala cittas and kusala cittas, but it is not through the paññā in vipassana, it is merely a theoretical level.

For a long time I thought that I knew through awareness that ^{of the satta} ~~different characteristics of~~ akusala cittas are different from kusala cittas, but now I know better. When the first step has not been reached, it is impossible. I wrote to someone else it is ^{difficult} going to discover this, it is surprising. Better to ^{try} if one does not know, otherwise one will never, never ^{know} it.

No 1: I notice that ^{it is not} it is not ^{the} satta. But sati arises with the citta ^{that} arises. It never could just be: it is not sati ^{because}, unless of course there is when the characteristic of that element is not realised, as it is. No. 4: Usually we take sound for self because we have not developed insight and do not see reality. It is: a confluence of nama/rupa elements.

The word confluence I am not sure about. When we take it as a whole, the name and the ^{thing} together, there is no experience of any characteristic, and there is mindfulness of that the thinking as a whole is hard. And the finger together is a whole, ^{and} realities are known as they appear ^{as} one ^{element} of ^{the} ^{to know} paramattha dhammas, ^{as} fictitious realities, just terms or names, or concepts.

8. Conditions for right awareness: study of books. Also listening listening to the right person. Considering, testing the meaning of what you heard. Seeing the value of sati in your life. You write: practice is required, but sati is the practice, but in order that it be right practice the right conditions are necessary.

9. When is one listening to the right person, how can one find out? I find, when ^{such a person} that person is the condition that there is less the trying to be aware, less the desire or result, less attachment to the self, more understanding of the right practice and of the right object. Less misconceptions about the way of developing, ~~less~~ less misunderstandings what awareness is, and what thinking is. The effect should be that one is more "true to oneself", more natural in one's way of practice, because there is less the desire to know all at once in the beginning, there is no reaching out above the level which is really one's level, namely the level of "babies", beginners. All this is very beneficial, and one can learn this from Khun Sujin.

10. Wrong practice: yes, I think if one has accumulated this

tendency one will be drawn towards those who preach it. As for results: one can make oneself believe a lot, and even when practising wrongly one thinks that there is a great result.

11. You say: sila, dana e and meditation make room for sati and are conditions for it to be present more often. It is true that all kinds of kusala should be encouraged, but often there are people who think that they induce sati and that the object of sati has to be wholesome, which is not true. The object does not have to be wholesome, since the aim is to know oneself, to see all namas and rupas as they are. Any object which appears can be the object of awareness and we should not think that first the dosa must disappear and then we are in the mood for sati. The word meditation: I think you ~~mean~~ mean samatha? But then we have to be very precise as to method and aim. Samatha does not condition ^{a lot of} the sati of vipassana, because as some people are hoping. I explained all this in Tokyo Letters VI, VII, VIII. People in the Buddha's time who were very skilful and could attain jhāna practised both samatha and vipassana, because if one attains enlightenment with lokuttara cittas accompanied by the jhana-factors, one can experience nibbana many times, also after the moment one attained enlightenment. If one has not those skills for what purpose would one practice samatha?

12. What hinders sati most. You answer: mindlessness, dispersion, physical restlessness or mental agitation, personality belief.

All these things can be object of awareness, they do not hinder sati. Personality belief will be eradicated by sati. It is really our desire for result, and wrong understanding of the practice what hinders sati. But, which leads us to wrong practice there can be awareness of it as only a nama, this hindrance disappears. Desire makes us try and choose objects and it conditions us to be discouraged. Desire is the second Noble Truth: no end to the cycle of birth and death so long as there is desire.

We tend to have misconceptions about quietness and agitation and if we study carefully the realities of the bhidhamma we understand better. I explain some of it in the fore-mentioned Tokyo Letters. What we call quietness and absence of mental agitation is usually moha with upekkha and lobha with upekkha. A lot of moha (so quiet, you do not feel much, just no

pleasant or unpleasant feeling) or attachment to no noise, it is so nice and quiet. No use to cultivate this kind of tranquillity. As to restlessness, uddhacca, this cetasika arises with each akusala citta, it is just a kind of nana and why do we think it hinders sati?

Khun Sujin said many times a Dhamma person should be true to himself, not deceive himself, know himself as he is. It includes not taking for a higher level of pañña what is only theoretical knowledge. Phra Dhammadhara is an example of someone who is true to himself and through his attitude he helps all of us to be like that: true to oneself, not deceive oneself. We still have a lot of defilements, we still have conditions for akusala, why deny it or pretend one does not have it? The aim is to know "one's true self" (but of course self here as conventional term). Those who practice in a forced way get something tense over themselves, they have it in Amsterdam in the Buddhist Center. But it can change, when they get to know more about realities. When I listen to the tapes I made in India and also to the tape Jonathan (in Bangkok) copied for me it strikes me there is a lot of laughter in it. We are not a dead-serious, gloomy lot. We had a lot of fun too in between all the Dhamma talks.

13. You write: right awareness of sound is sati while thinking about sound is a mental process, citta. But also sati is in a mental process, arises with citta, during the javana cittas. We also have to know precisely: what is right awareness of sound?

When sound is presents itself and it is known as only sound, no bird in the sound, no voice in the sound, no you, no him, no person, no thing in the sound, but just sound, right awareness of sound is being developed.

When we believe there is awareness of sound, but there is a bird, a thing, a mixed person mixed up in our idea of sound, there is thinking of a concept. That thinking is a reality too, but we should not confuse it with the sound. Or we think: this is sound, sound, or: this is rūpa, rūpa. Again there is thinking mixed with of ideas, concepts.

The same for visible object: no person mixed with it, in it. Visible object is that which appears through the eyes and should be experienced as it is: just visible object. When visible object appears, there must also be the experience of

visible object. Sati can learn to be aware also of ^{the experience of} (visible object), ^{different from visible object}. But it depends on the sati and nothing can be forced. Phra Dhammadharo explained that we ^{erroneously} try in the beginning to see seeing, in order to know the difference. Anyway: one cannot see seeing, it could never appear through the eye-door, it can only be known through the mind-door (no nama can be known through a sense-door). But we know there must be a reality which ~~experiences~~ experiences visible object, since visible object appears. When we have seen the difference between thinking about things and right awareness there is less trying to know the difference, and the less trying the better.

14. The right object for sati is the object which presents itself here and now through one of the six doors, you write. That is all right for the theory, but I have found myself that I can write books and books and explain the theory, but the practice? It takes a long time before one really understands, and stops mixing up thinking and awareness, stops trying to know.

under 6, I would rather substitute for feeling: the experience of hardness or heat. There are rupas, and the experience of these rupas. Feeling accompanies ~~ex~~ every citta.

Thus, until the first step: we do not try to know different namas, different kinds of cetasikas, trying to know is no good. Sati's only job is: when hardness presents itself: let hardness be realised as only hardness, as it is, nothing else mixed with it or in it, that is all. When the object is right object. When heat appears: it should be known as heat. When the experience of heat appears: it should be known as the experience of heat, different from heat. The same for the other doorways, but there should not be any forcing to know all realities through all doorways. We do not know what is going to present itself, of what sati will be aware. I wrote about all this, but when it comes to the practice it is quite something else, pañña will not be developed within a short time. Khun Sujin said: it has to be like that, that we take the theoretical knowledge for pañña in vipassana, we all do. It happens that there are a lot of misunderstandings, is bound to be like that. Because of our accumulated defilements.